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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (09/14): Palestinian factions
insist presidential and legislative elections be held in January
2010

Main Stories:

Al-Quds leads with news citing Israeli daily Haaretz that an agreement has been reached between the Palestinians and Israelis to re-launch negotiations next month based on an agreement to create an independent Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders in two years. The report notes that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has designated Chief Negotiator Saeb Erekat to lead the Palestinian negotiations team, while President Abbas will conduct talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Al-Ayyam, however, quotes Erekat denying an agreement of this type.

The local press highlights the September 13 meeting between Prime Minister Netanyahu and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo. According to coverage, Mubarak urged Netanyahu to halt all settlement activities (including natural growth), and stressed that Jerusalem has very special status for the Arabs and Muslims, which should be respected. Mubarak also urged Israel to pursue negotiations with the Palestinians.

Al-Quds front pages news on Prime Minister Netanyahu reiterating Sunday that there are still gaps between the US and Israeli positions regarding re-starting negotiations, which have to be bridged during his talks with the US Special Envoy George Mitchell.

The local press highlights news on Jibreel Al-Roujoub, member of the Fatah Central Committee noting to the press after his meeting with Egyptian Intelligence Chief Omar Sulaiman and Arab League Secretary General Amr Mousa in Egypt on September 13 that Fatah is committed to holding presidential and legislative elections in January 2010.

Al-Roujoub reiterated that Fatah is working hard to achieve national reconciliation based on a unified clear vision. In related news, Al-Hayat Al-Jadida front pages coverage citing AFP on Palestinian politicians and analysts expecting that October should be a turning point for national reconciliation efforts, either producing an agreement or deepening the state of division between Hamas and Fatah.

All three dailies report on the launching of the partnership program between Bard College and Al-Quds University on September 13. The papers quote US Consul General Daniel Rubinstein noting that this project represents the partnership that President Obama called for with the Arab World and focused on fostering greater educational partnerships and exchanges between the US and the Arab world.

Weekend Stories:

Sunday, September 13:

All three dailies run front page stories citing sources within the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Executive Committee confirming that the Palestinian response to the Egyptian plan to end the internal division will include four main issues: the importance of building upon what was agreed during the previous rounds of national dialogue; rejection of any attempts to undermine the status and role of the PLO; the need to ensure that none of the proposed measures contradict with the Basic Law of the Palestinian Authority (thereby rejecting the idea of postponing the legislative and

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presidential elections); and, accepting any agreement that helps end the occupation. Al Ayyam reported that President Abbas' response to the plan consisted of a number of comments and observations, the most important of which was the lack of a specific date for conducting the presidential and legislative elections. Hamas said that they will respond to the plan after the Eid holiday.

Al Quds runs a front page story on a report issued by the Jerusalem Center for Social and Economic Rights that stated American organizations are financing illegal and illegitimate settlements through tax exempt donations. The report calls upon the US to stop these organizations that finance the construction of settlements on Palestinian lands, particularly in Jerusalem, including those that finance the seizing of real estate and properties owned by Palestinians in Jerusalem. (Al Quds publishes an extensive review of the report in the inside pages.)

Saturday September 12:

Al Hayat Al Jadida and Al Quds run front page stories quoting Palestinian Chief Negotiator Saeb Erekat stating that Special Envoy George Mitchell will meet Tuesday with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. During the meeting, Abbas will emphasize the need to exert pressure on Israel to stop all settlement activities. Erekat also stressed that there are no plans for a meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu, and noted the importance of Mitchell's upcoming visit that comes prior to the Quartet's meeting later this month in New York.

Al Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida run front page stories on Prime Minister Netanyahu's Sunday meeting with President Mubarak to discuss reviving the peace process. Israeli media sources reported that Prime Minister Netanyahu hopes that Egypt will convince President Abbas to participate in a tri-lateral meeting with Netanyahu and President Obama on the margins of the UN General Assembly meetings in New York.

Al Quds runs a front page story citing Israeli sources that the Jerusalem Municipality, in cooperation with the Israeli government, is preparing to build 3,000 new settlement units in Gilo, Abu Ghneim (Har Homa), Pisgat Ze'ev, and Ramot. The Israeli weekly newspaper Kol Hazman reported Friday that construction will start soon. In related news, representatives of Israeli settlers in the West Bank announced Friday the launch of a campaign against a settlement

freeze. The campaign will start on/around September 20 with a sit-in across the street from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's headquarters in Jerusalem.

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Rajeh Abu Asab opines in Al-Quds independent daily under the title "Isn't it time to end the Palestinian division?" (09/14): "In order to bridge the gaps between the Palestinian factions, presidential and legislative elections must be held next January as scheduled ... and then form a national unity government for an independent Palestinian state with clear borders."

2) Samih Shbeib opines in Al-Ayyam independent daily under the title "Presidential and legislative elections" (09/14): "Holding the Palestinian elections is a political battle by all means. It is a battle against the internal division, against those who dismiss the

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law and order. It is a battle to preserve legitimacy and protect it."

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